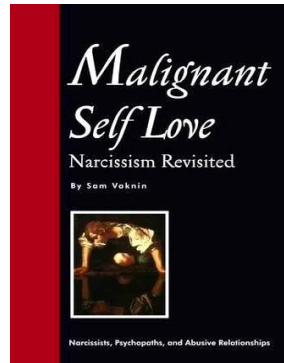


# *Surpassing Man*

*An Epistolary Dialogue Between  
Roberto Calvo Macias and [Dr. Sam Vaknin](#)*



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I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name Zarathustra means in precisely my mouth, in the mouth of the first immoralist: for what constitutes the tremendous uniqueness of that Persian in history is precisely the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself, is his work. But this question is itself at bottom its own answer. Zarathustra created this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently he must also be the first to recognize it. Not only has he had longer and greater experience here than any other thinker ... what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue.... To tell the truth and to shoot well with arrows: that is Persian virtue - Have I been understood? The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite - into me - that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth.

- F. W. Nietzsche - from "Ecce Homo":

"And life itself told me this secret: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am that which must overcome itself again and again.'"

- Zarathustra in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" by F.W. Nietzsche:

"I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?"

All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment...

Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoning themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go.

Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth...

What is the greatest experience you can have? It is the hour of the great contempt. The hour when your happiness, too, arouses your disgust, and even your reason and your virtue.

The hour when you say, 'What matters my happiness? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness ought to justify existence itself.'

The hour when you say, 'What matters my reason? Does it crave knowledge as the lion his food? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'

The hour when you say, 'What matters my virtue? As yet it has not made me rage. How weary I am of my good and my evil! All that is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'

Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman - a rope over an abyss...

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under...

I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.

Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the last man.

'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and blinks.

The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea; the last man lives longest.

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth...

One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion.

No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.

'Formerly, all the world was mad,' say the most refined, and they blink...

One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink."

*From Nietzsche's Thus spoke Zarathustra, p.3,4,5, Walter Kaufmann transl.*

### **On the Three Metamorphoses of the Spirit**

Of the three metamorphoses of the spirit I tell you: how the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child.

There is much that is difficult for the spirit, the strong, reverent spirit that would bear much: but the difficult and the most difficult are what its strength demands.

What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded. What is most difficult, O heroes, asks the spirit that would bear much, that I may take it upon myself and exult in my strength? Is it

not humbling oneself to wound one's haughtiness? Letting one's folly shine to mock one's wisdom?...

Or is it this: stepping into filthy waters when they are the waters of truth, and not repulsing cold frogs and hot toads?

Or is it this: loving those that despise us and offering a hand to the ghost that would frighten us?

All these most difficult things the spirit that would bear much takes upon itself: like the camel that, burdened, speeds into the desert, thus the spirit speeds into its desert.

In the loneliest desert, however, the second metamorphosis occurs: here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks out his last master: he wants to fight him and his last god; for ultimate victory he wants to fight with the great dragon.

Who is the great dragon whom the spirit will no longer call lord and god? "Thou shalt" is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says, "I will." "Thou shalt" lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales; and on every scale shines a golden "thou shalt."

Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: "All value has long been created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more 'I will.'" Thus speaks the dragon.

My brothers, why is there a need in the spirit for the lion? Why is not the beast of burden, which renounces and is reverent, enough?

To create new values - that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred "No" even to duty - for that, my brothers, the lion is needed. To assume the right to new values - that is the most terrifying assumption for a reverent spirit that would bear much. Verily, to him it is preying, and a matter for a beast of prey. He once loved "thou shalt" as most sacred: now he must find illusion and caprice even in the most sacred, that freedom from his love may become his prey: the lion is needed for such prey.

But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers the world.

*From Nietzsche's Thus spoke Zarathustra, part I, Walter Kaufmann transl.*

Dear Roberto,

This letter is an opening salvo. I will save the heavy ammunition (mainly Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Fichte, Hegel, Weber, others) to later.

Mankind is at an unprecedented technological crossroads. The confluence of telecommunications, mass transport, global computer networks and the mass media is unique in the annals of human ingenuity. That Mankind is about to be transformed is beyond dispute. The question is: "What will succeed Man, what will follow humanity?". Is it merely a matter of an adaptive reaction in the form of a new culture (as I have suggested in our previous dialogue - ["The Law of Technology"](#))? Or will it take a new RACE, a new SPECIES to respond to these emerging challenges, as you have wondered in the same exchange.

Mankind can be surpassed by extension, by simulation, by emulation and by exceeding.

Briefly:

Man can extend his capacities - physical and mental - through the use of technology. He can extend his brain (computers), his legs (vehicles and air transport), his eyes (microscopes, telescopes) - etc. When these gadgets are miniaturized to the point of being integrated in the human body and even becoming part of the genetic material - will we have a new species? If we install an artificially manufactured carbon-DNA chip in the brain that contains all the data in the world, allows for instant communication and coordination with other humans and replicates itself (so that it is automatically a part of every human embryo) - are we then turned into ant colonies?

Man can simulate other species and incorporate the simulating behaviours as well as their products in his genetic baggage so that it is passed on to future generations. If the simulation is sufficiently pervasive and serves to dramatically alter substantial human behaviours and biochemical processes (including the biochemistry of the brain) - will we then be considered an altogether different species?

If all humans were to suddenly and radically diverge from current patterns of behaviour and emulate others - in other words, if these future humans were absolutely unrecognizable by us as humans - would we still consider them human? Is the definition of species a matter of sheer biology? After all, the evolution of Mankind is biological only in small part. The human race is evolving culturally (by transmitting what Dawkins calls "memes" rather than the good old genes). Shouldn't we be defined more by our civilization than by our chromosomes? And if

a future civilization is sufficiently at odds with our current ones - wouldn't we be justified in saying that a new human species has been born?

Finally, Man can surpass and overcome himself by exceeding himself - morally and ethically. Is Mankind substantially altered by the adoption of different moral standards? Or by the decision to forgo moral standards (in favour of the truth, for example)? What defining role does morality play in the definition, differentiation and distinction of our species?

Sam

Hi, Sam

Good work with your first salvo. You have drawn the chessboard that will allow us to play that delightful game: to speculate.

I also like the four branches of your hypothesis with its different points of view: the technological, the physical, the cultural, the ethical and the biological. In fact, they are indeed an inquiry into human identity. What defines us as human beings? What could be different to and better than us? Those are, indeed, the same questions Nietzsche circled: what is beyond us? One source of comparison from which we can learn what humanity considers as superhuman are aliens, this strange version of angels and demons and overmen. Some are technologically superior: predators. Others represent life forces: aliens. Yet others have mental powers (with their hyper-desarrollated brains): ET, telekinesis, omnipresence are the favourite miracles of the supernatural.

Your excerpts are very pertinent indeed. In the chapter of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" you refer to, Nietzsche summarizes it all in a decisive question: "Shall we keep the song of the Earth" and we can add: but does the Earth want us?

It is interesting to note the transition of philosophers in the last few centuries, from Knowledge to Life, from Kant, Descartes and Leibniz to Nietzsche and Bergson, from mind to destiny, from being to becoming. From a perspective, it seems like a race which is reaching its end, the final question. Are we the end or a mere "process"? No doubt this is the final, unexpected consequence of Darwinism - Descartes' "school of scepticism" did the rest. As tai-chi fighters say: "once something moves, everything moves". The celebrated phrase of Galileo: "E pur si muove" is the sign of the times. As you have pointed out, Mankind has been set in motion. It is a "total mobilization". The Earth is no longer the centre of universe but a space ball cutting through the universe with a great velocity- a universe, which is itself moving, expanding. It is curious to see that the first ones to recognize this mobilization were skaters:-)

Galileo's telescope took the human mind out of this Earth. Humans are now universal beings. The race for knowledge ends in history (in some religions, illumination emerges when we reach the memory of our birth). In a strange reversal, Western philosophy went back to life. Darwin, using economic theories, drew a nature in motion. Nietzsche saw in Darwinism a hidden truth and put life at the top of all values. We love the change, the becoming..., paradise is now the jungle, with its exuberance and fertility.

And, to come back to identity, what did Mr. Darwin see? Is it that we are descendent from the ape? Oh, my god! :-) Is it that other animals will study us humans in a zoo? Or will we simply disappear like the pre-homo sapiens? How will the next Man be called? Will it be "homo-technos"? Or will the homo-technos call us primitives and commit us to slavery?

But, let us see what is happening now: from life to knowledge yet again.

Nietzsche dreamt up a brain-change, the next step in intellectual evolution, a cold, aristocratic mind mixed with some renaissance "hysteria of power": a Cesar Borgia. The technician was more radical, he wanted facts. So he went from biology to bio-technology.

Ah, and it is now when things get interesting! For we artists always like to regard life as a show. What a beautiful tragedy! The apprentice now has the tools and the elements, he has the "genies" in the bottle, so, what does he wish for? What kind of magic does he want? Does he know the words to stop the besom? Which are the sweet dreams of our dear "Promethechnicus"? What is our dirty little secret? Are we looking for the "philosophers' stone"? Or have we more Faustian desires? Do we want the whole prize? Even at the high price of life itself? What is the temptation of our kind? An old favourite?

Könnt ich Magie von meinem Pfad entfernen,  
Die Zaubersprüche ganz und gar verlernen

(Grant me the power to put the magic of my way,  
to forget at all my magic words)

*Goethe*

(freely translated)

Awaiting with expectation your "storms of steel" (E. Junger term for the "material battles" of World war I - but I should confess that I have an ace down my sleeve, an unexpected joker:-) - so take the big guns:-)

best regards  
roberto

Dear Roberto,

In your opening gambit you most definitely asked the pertinent question - to ask what will replace Man is to ask WHAT is Man. There is an interesting infinite regression here, a recursiveness which is the result of a unique trait of intelligence: introspection. Humans are BOTH the subject of the definition and those defining. It is Man who defines Man. Changing the definition of Man will inevitably change the way Man is defined and the resulting definition of Man. So, it is a conceptual perpetuum mobile, Munchausen pulling himself by his own hair, bootstrapping. With this caveat in mind, we can revert to history.

In a relatively short period of time (less than 7000 years) Man has experienced three traumatic shifts in self-perception (in other words, in his identity and definition). At the beginning of this period, Man was helpless, in awe, phobic, terrified, submissive, terrorized and controlled by the Universe (as he perceived it). He was one part of nature sharing it with many other beings, in constant competition for scarce resources, subject to a permanent threat of annihilation. Then - with the advent of monotheistic religions and pre-modern science and technology - Man became the self-appointed and self-proclaimed crowning achievement of the universe. Man was the last, most developed, most deserving link in a chain. He was the centre and at the centre. Everything revolved around him. It was a [narcissistic phase](#). This phase was followed by the disillusionment and sobering up wrought by modern science. Man - once again - became just one element of nature, dependent upon his environment, competing for scarce resources, in risk of nuclear, or environmental annihilation. Three traumas. Three shocks.

Nietzsche was the harbinger of the backlash - the Fourth Cycle. Mankind is again about to declare itself the crown of creation, the source of all values (contra to Judeo-Christian-Islamic values), subjugator and master of nature (with the aid of modern technologies). It is a [narcissistic rebellion](#) which is bound to involve all the known psychological defence mechanisms. And it is likely to take place on all four dimensions: by extension, by simulation, by emulation and by exceeding.

Let us start with the Nietzschean concept of overcoming: the re-invention of morality with (Over-)Man at its centre. This is what I call "exceeding". Allow me to quote myself:

"Finally, Man can surpass and overcome himself by exceeding himself - morally and ethically. Is Mankind substantially altered by the adoption of different moral standards? Or by the decision to forgo moral standards (in favour of the truth, for example)? What defining role does morality play in the definition, differentiation and distinction of our species?"



Nietzsche's Overman is a challenge to society as a whole and to its values and value systems in particular. The latter are considered by Nietzsche to be obstacles to growth, abstract fantasies which contribute nothing positive to humanity's struggle to survive. Nietzsche is not against values and value systems as such - but against SPECIFIC values, the Judaeo-Christian ones. It relies on a transcendental, immutable, objective source of supreme, omniscient, long term benevolent source (God). Because God (an irrelevant human construct) is a-human (humans are not omniscience and omnipotent) his values are inhuman and irrelevant to our existence. They hamper the fulfilment of our potential as humans. Enter the Overman. He is a human being who generates values in accordance with data that he collects from his environment. He employs his intuition (regarding good and evil) to form values and then tests them empirically and without prejudice. Needless to say that this future human does not resort to contraptions such as the after-life or to a denial of his drives and needs in the gratification of which he takes great pleasure. In other words, the Overman is not ascetic and does not deny his self in order to alleviate his suffering by re-interpreting it ("suffering in this world is rewarded in the afterlife" as institutionalized religions are wont to say). The Overman dispenses with guilt and shame as anti-nihilistic devices. Feeling negative about oneself the pre-Overman Man is unable to joyously and uninhibitedly materialize the full range of his potentials. The ensuing frustration and repressed aggression weaken Man both physically and psychologically.

So, the Overman or Superman is NOT a post-human being. It IS a human being just like you and I but with different values. It is really an interpretative principle, an exegesis of reality, a unified theory of the meaning and fullness of being human. He has no authority outside himself, no values "out there" and fully trusts himself to tell good from evil. Simply: that which works, promotes his welfare and happiness and helps him realize his full range of potentials - is good. And everything - including values and the Overman himself - everything - is transitory, contingent, replaceable, changeable and subject to the continuous scrutiny of Darwinian natural selection. The fact that the Superman does NOT take himself and his place in the universe as granted is precisely what "overcoming" means. The Overman co-exists with the weaker and the more ignorant specimen of Mankind. Actually, the Overmen are destined to LEAD the rest of humanity and to guide it. They guide it in light of their values: self-realization, survival in strength, continual re-invention, etc. Overcoming is not only a process or a mechanism - it is also the meaning of life itself. It constitutes the reason to live.

Paradoxically, the Superman is a very social creature. He regards humanity as a bridge between the current Man or Overman and the future one. Since there is no way of predicting at birth who will end up being the next Man - life is sacred and overcoming becomes a collective effort and a social enterprise. Creation (the "will's joy") - the Superman's main and constant activity - is meaningless in the absence of a context.

Even if we ignore for a minute the strong RELIGIOUS overtones and undertones of Nietzsche's Übermensch belief-system - it is clear that Nietzsche provides us with no prediction regarding the future of Mankind. He simply analyses the psychological makeup of leaders and contrasts it with the superstitious, herd-like, self-defeating values of the masses. Nietzsche was vindicated by the hedonism and individualism of the 20th century. Nazi Germany was the grossly malignant form of "Nietzscheanism".

We have to look somewhere else for the future Mankind.

I wrote: "Man can extend his capacities - physical and mental - through the use of technology. He can extend his brain (computers), his legs (vehicles and air transport), his eyes (microscopes, telescopes) - etc. When these gadgets are miniaturized to the point of being integrated in the human body and even becoming part of the genetic material - will we have a new species? If we install an artificially manufactured carbon-DNA chip in the brain that contains all the data in the world, allows for instant communication and coordination with other humans and replicates itself (so that it is automatically a part of every human embryo) - are we then turned into ant colonies?"

To this I can add:

Teleportation is the re-assembly of the atoms constituting a human being in accordance with a data matrix in a remote location. Let us assume that the mental state of the teleported can be re-constructed. Will it be the "same" person? What if we teleport whole communities? What if we were to send such "personality matrices" by 3-D fax? What if we were able to fully transplant brains - who is the resulting human: the recipient or the donor? What about cloning? What if we could tape and record the full range of mental states (thoughts, dreams, emotions) and play them back to the same person or to another human being? What about cyborgs who are controlled by the machine part of the hybrid organism? How will "human" be defined if all brains were to be connected to a central brain and subordinated to it partially or wholly? This sci-fi list can be extended indefinitely. It serves only to show how tenuous and unreliable is the very definition of "being human".

We cannot begin to contemplate the question "what will supplant humanity as we know it" without first FULLY answering the question: "what IS humanity?". What are the immutable and irreducible elements of "being human"? The elements whose alteration - let alone elimination - will make the difference between "being human" and "not being human". These elements we have to isolate before we can proceed meaningfully. I will try to do it in my next letter.

Your turn, human Roberto.

Sam

Hi Sam,

I enjoyed your letter. As far as I know your summary of Nietzsche's philosophy is the best one I've seen - it should be taught in such way in high schools:-). I would like to add just a small commentary. There can be no question that the Nazis would have been a real object of Nietzsche's hate (Himmler, with his bourgeois attitude is the best example). Moreover, I am sure that had Nietzsche lived in the 1930s, he would have written some kind of choleric evangelium to take the Nazis out of the world. The Nazis were the summary of all that Nietzsche hated the most: plebeian manners, their adoration of pure violence, their hatred of high culture, etc. Moreover, In "Aurora", he envisaged the Jews as a substantial part of the next European aristocracy. In fact, as you have well observed too, "old podwer-head" was a romantic, he dreamt up a kind of aristocratic society, a sort of mixture of classic Greece and XVII France.

Let us see this "exceeding" of man from a different point of view.

At the beginning of the century an Indian "thinker", Sri Aurobindo, was studying some Western philosophy. He found Nietzsche's writings and saw in them a confused, foggy prophecy - but at least it was a prophecy. By that time, Aurobindo himself was working on the subject of evolution from an Asiatic point of view. In his view, nature evolves from matter to spirit, using a universal, multipolar (post-modernism?) point of view. He devised something called the Supermind, the next evolutionary step. As far as I know Aurobindo was one of the first to state so clearly and in such terms the next evolutionary step. A comparison of Aurobindo's theories (we will resume the super-mind learnings in the next letters) and modern theories of "the information society" is fascinating and revealing. Aurobindo's works allow us to see the superman from a different point of view, not titanic but divine, in the best style of Indian metaphysics. Well, it is just another point of view:-) but it is curious to behold these different views.

Let us see what Aurobindo said about Nietzsche's Over-Man in 1915 (I hope I am not breaking any [Law of Technology](#):-):

### **The Type of Superman**

(Published in "Arya - The Superman" Vol I)

"The ideal of the Superman has been brought recently into much notice, some not very fruitful discussion and a good deal of obloquy. It is apt to be resented by average humanity because men are told or have a lurking consciousness that here is a claim of the few to ascend to heights of which the many are not capable, to concentrate moral and spiritual privileges and enjoy a domination, powers and immunities hurtful to a diffused dignity and freedom in mankind. So considered, supermanhood is nothing more important than a deification of the rare and solitary

ego that has out-topped others in the force of our common human qualities. But this presentation is narrow and a travesty. The gospel of true supermanhood gives us a generous ideal for the progressive human race and should not be turned into an arrogant claim for a class or individuals. It is a call to man to do what no species has yet done or aspired to do in terrestrial history, evolve itself consciously into the next superior type already half foreseen by the continual cyclic development of the world-idea in Nature's fruitful musings. And when we so envisage it, this conception ranks surely as one of the most potent seeds that can be cast by thought into the soil of our human growth.

Nietzsche first cast it, the mystic of Will-worship, the troubled, profound, half-luminous Hellenising Slav with his strange clarities, his violent half-ideas, his rare gleaming intuitions that came marked with the stamp of an absolute truth and sovereignty of light. But Nietzsche was an apostle who never entirely understood his own message. His prophetic style was like that of the Delphic oracles which spoke constantly the word of the Truth but turned it into untruth in the mind of the hearer. Not always indeed; for sometimes he rose beyond his personal temperament and individual mind, his European inheritance and environment, his revolt against the Christ-idea, his war against current moral values and spoke out the Word as he had heard it, the Truth as he had seen it, bare, luminous, impersonal and therefore flawless and imperishable. But for the most part, this message that had come to his inner hearing vibrating out of a distant infinite like a strain caught from the lyre of far-off Gods, did get, in his effort to appropriate and make it nearer to him, mixed up with a somewhat turbulent surge of collateral ideas that drowned much of the pure original note.

Especially, in his concept of the Superman he never cleared his mind of a preliminary confusion. For if a sort of human godhead is the goal to which the race must advance, the first difficulty is that we have to decide to which of two very different types of divinity the idea in us should owe allegiance. For the deity within may confront us either with the clear, joyous and radiant countenance of the God or the stern convulsed visage of the Titan. Nietzsche hymned the Olympian, but presented him with the aspect of the Asura. His hostile pre-occupation with the Christ-idea of the crucified God and its consequences was perhaps responsible for this distortion as much as his subjection to the imperfect ideas of the Greeks. He presents to us a superman who fiercely and arrogantly repels the burden of sorrow and service, not one who arises victorious over mortality and suffering, his ascension vibrant with the triumph-song of a liberated humanity. To lose the link of Nature's moral evolution is a capital fault in the apostle of supermanhood; for only out of the unavoidable line of the evolution can that emerge in the bosom of a humanity long tested, ripened and purified by the fire of egoistic and altruistic suffering.

God and Titan, Deva and Asura, are indeed close kin in their differences; nor could either have been spared in the evolution. Yet do they inhabit opposite poles of a

common existence and common nature. The one descends from the light and the infinity, satisfied, to the play; the other ascends from the obscurity and the vagueness, angry, to the struggle. All the acts of the God derive from the universal and tend to the universal. He was born out of a victorious harmony. His qualities join pure and gracious hands and link themselves together naturally and with delight as in the pastoral round of Brindavan, divine Krishna dominating and holding together its perfect circles. To evolve in the sense of the God is to grow in intuition, in light, in joy, in love, in happy mastery; to serve by rule and to rule by service; to be able to be bold and swift and even violent without hurt or wickedness and mild and kindly and even self-indulgent without laxity or vice or weakness; to make a bright and happy whole in oneself and, by sympathy, with mankind and all creatures. And in the end it is to evolve a large impersonal personality and to heighten sympathy into constant experience of world-oneness. For such are the Gods, conscious always of their universality and therefore divine.

Certainly, power is included. To be the divine man is to be self-ruler and world-ruler, but in another than the external sense. This is a rule that depends upon a secret sympathy and oneness which knows the law of another's being and of the world's being and helps or, if need be, compels it to realise its own greatest possibilities, but by a divine and essentially an inner compulsion. It is to take all qualities, energies, joys, sorrows, thoughts, knowledge, hopes, aims of the world around us into ourselves and return them enriched and transmuted in a sublime commerce and exploitation. Such an empire asks for no vulgar ostentation or golden trappings. The gods work oftenest veiled by light or by the storm-drift; they do not disdain to live among men even in the garb of the herdsman or the artisan; they do not shrink from the cross and the crown of thorns either in their inner evolution or their outward fortunes. For they know that the ego must be crucified and how shall men consent to this if God and the gods have not shown them the way? To take all that is essential in the human being and uplift it to its most absolute term so that it may become an element of light, joy, power for oneself and others, this is divinity. This, too, should be the drift of supermanhood.

But the Titan will have nothing of all this; it is too great and subtle for his comprehension. His instincts call for a visible, tangible mastery and a sensational domination. How shall he feel sure of his empire unless he can feel something writhing helpless under his heel - if in agony, so much the better? What is exploitation to him, unless it diminishes the exploited? To be able to coerce, exact, slay, overtly, irresistibly - it is this that fills him with the sense of glory and dominion. For he is the son of division and the strong flowering of the Ego. To feel the comparative limitation of others is necessary to him that he may imagine himself immeasurable; for he has not the real self-existent sense of infinity which no outward circumstance can abrogate. Contrast, division, negation of the wills and lives of others are essential to his self-development and self-assertion. The Titan would unify by devouring, not by harmonising; he must conquer and trample what

is not himself either out of existence or into subservience so that his own image may stand out stamped upon all things and dominating all his environment.

In Nature, since it started from division and egoism, the Titan had to come first; he is here in us as the elder god, the first ruler of man's heaven and earth. Then arrives the God and delivers and harmonises. Thus the old legend tells us that the Deva and the Asura laboured together to churn the ocean of life for the supreme draught of immortality, but, once it had been won, Vishnu kept it for the God and defrauded the fiercer and more violent worker. And this seems unjust; for the Asura has the heavier and less grateful portion of the burden. He begins and leads; he goes his way hewing, shaping, planting; the God follows, amends, concludes, reaps. He prepares fiercely and with anguish against a thousand obstacles the force that we shall use: the other enjoys the victory and the delight. And therefore to the great God Shiva the stained and stormy Titan is very dear, - Shiva who took for himself the fierce, dark and bitter poison first churned up from the sea of life and left to others the nectar. But the choice that Shiva made with knowledge and from love, the Titans made from darkness and passion - desirous really of something very different and deceived by their stormy egoism. Therefore, the award of Vishnu stands, to the God shall fall the crown and the immortality and not, unless he divinise himself, to the proud and strenuous Asura.

For what is supermanhood but a certain divine and harmonious absolute of all that is essential in man? He is made in God's image, but there is this difference between the divine Reality and its human representative that everything which in the one is unlimited, spontaneous, absolute, harmonious, self-possessed becomes in the other limited, relative, laboured, discordant, deformed, possessed by struggle, kept by subservience to one's possessions, lost by the transience and insecurity which come from wrong holding. But in this constant imperfection there is always a craving and an aspiration towards perfection. Man, limited, yearns to the Infinite; relative, is attracted in all things towards their absolute; artificial in nature, drives towards a higher ease, mastery and naturalness that must for ever be denied to her inconscient forces and half-conscient animals; full of discords, he insists upon harmony; possessed by Nature and to her enslaved, is yet convinced of his mission to possess and master her. What he aspires to, is the sign of what he may be. He has to pass by a sort of transmutation of the earthly metal he now is out of flawed manhood into some higher symbol. For Man is Nature's great term of transition in which she grows conscious of her aim; in him she looks up from the animal with open eyes towards her divine ideal.

But God is complex, not simple; and the temptation of the human intellect is to make a short cut to the divine nature by the exclusive worship of one of its principles. Knowledge, Love whose secret word is Delight, Power and Unity are some of the Names of God. But though they are all divine, yet to follow any of them exclusively is to invite, after the first energy is over, His departure from us and denial; for even unity, exclusively pursued, ceases to be a true oneness. Yet

this error we perpetually commit. Is it Love, in whose temple we adore? Then we shut its gates upon Power as a child of the world and the devil and bid Knowledge carry elsewhere her lack of sweetness and remoteness from the heart's fervour. We erect an idol of Power and would pass all else through the fire of Moloch before its sombre and formidable image, expelling Love with scorn as a nurse of weaklings and degrading Knowledge to the position of a squire or even a groom of Force. Or we cultivate Knowledge with a severe aloofness and austerity to find at last the lotus of the heart dulled and fading - happy if its more divine faculties are not already atrophied - and ourselves standing impotent with our science while the thunders of Rudra crash through and devastate the world we have organised so well by our victorious and clear-minded efficiency. Or we run after a vague and mechanical zero we call unity and when we have sterilised our secret roots and dried up the wells of Life within us, discover, unwise unifiers, that we have achieved death and not a greater existence. And all this happens because we will not recognise the complexity of the riddle we are set here to solve. It is a great and divine riddle, but it is no knot of Gordius, nor is its all-wise Author a dead King that he should suffer us to mock his intention and cut through to our will with the fierce impatience of the hasty mortal conqueror.

None of these oppositions is more constant than that of Power and Love. Yet neither of these deities can be safely neglected. What can be more divine than Love? But followed exclusively it is impotent to solve the world's discords. The worshipped Avatar of love and the tender saint of saints leave behind them a divine but unfollowed example, a luminous and imperishable but ineffective memory. They had added an element to the potentialities of the heart, but the race cannot utilise it effectively for life because it has not been harmonised with the rest of the qualities that are essential to our fullness. Shall we therefore turn round and give ourselves to Power with its iron hands of action and its hard and clear practical intellect? The men of power may say that they have done a more tangible work for their race than the souls of Love, but it is a vain advantage. For they have not even tried to raise us beyond our imperfect humanity. They have erected a temporary form or given a secular impetus. An empire has been created, an age or a century organised, but the level of humanity has not been raised nearer to the secret of a Caesar or a Napoleon. Love fails because it hastily rejects the material of the world's discords or only tramples them underfoot in an unusual ecstasy; Power, because it seeks only to organise an external arrangement. The world's discords have to be understood, seized, transmuted. Love must call Power and Knowledge into the temple and seat them beside her in a unified equality; Power must bow its neck to the yoke of Light and Love before it can do any real good to the race.

Unity is the secret, a complex, understanding and embracing unity. When the full heart of Love is tranquillised by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength, when the strong hands of Power labour for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light, when the luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart's obscure inspirations and lends itself to the workings of the high-seated Will,

when all these gods are founded together on a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them, then is the condition of man's integral self-transcendence. This and not a haughty, strong and brilliant egoistic self-culture enthroning itself upon an enslaved humanity is the divine way of supermanhood."

Well, enough literature for a human day:-)

To be continued...

best regards

roberto

Dear RCM,

Long time no heard. I was busy publishing my latest graphomania (["After the Rain - How the West Lost the East"](#)).

The big flaw in the arguments of philosopher-anthropologists (from Montaigne to Nietzsche) - whether prescriptive or descriptive - is that they didn't seem to have asked themselves what was it that they were studying. I am not referring to a phenomenology of humans (their physiology, their social organization, their behavioural codes). There is a veritable mountain ridge of material composed based on evidence collected from observations of homo sapiens. But what IS homo sapiens? WHAT is being observed?

Consider the following: would you have still classified me as human had I been transformed to pure (though structured) energy, devoid of any physical aspect, attribute, or dimension? I doubt it. We feel so ill at ease with non-body manifestations of existence that we try to anthropomorphesize God Himself and to materialize ghosts. God is "angry" or "vengeful" or (more rarely) "forgiving". Thus He is made human. Moreover, He is made corporeal. Anger or vengeance are meaningless bereft of their physical aspect and physiological association.

But what about the mind? Surely, if there were a way to "preserve" the mind in an appropriate container (which would also allow for interactions) - that mind would have been considered human. Not entirely, it seems. IT would have been considered to have human attributes or characteristics (intelligence, sense of humour) - but it would NOT have been considered to be an HUMAN. It would have been impossible to fall in love with IT, for instance.

So, an interesting distinction emerges between the property of BEING HUMAN (a universal) and the TROPES (the unique properties of) particular human beings. A disembodied mind CAN be human - and so can a particularly clever dog or robot (the source of the artificial intelligence conundrum). But nothing can be a



particular human being - except that particular human being, body and all. This sounds confusing but it really is a simple and straightforward distinction. To be a particular instance of Mankind, the object needs to possess ALL the attributes of being human plus his tropes (body of a specific shape and chemistry, a specific DNA, intelligence and so on). But being human is a universal and thus lends itself to other objects even though they do not possess the tropes of the particular. To put it differently: all the instances of "being human" (all humans and objects which can be considered human - such as disembodied minds, Stephen Hawking, Homo Australopithecus and future Turing Tested computers) share the universal and are distinguished from each other only by their tropes. "Being Human" applies to a FAMILY of objects - Man being only ONE of them. Humans are the objects that possess ALL the traits and attributes of the universal as well as tropes. Humans are, therefore, the complete (not to be confused with "perfect") embodiment of the universal "being human". Intelligent robots, clever parrots and so on are also human but only partly so.

Isn't this scholastic rubbish? thus defined even a broom would be somewhat human.

Indeed, a broom IS somewhat "human". And so is a dolphin. The Cartesian division of the world to observer and observed is a convenient but misleading tool of abstraction. Humans are part of nature and the products of humans are part of nature and part of humanity. A pacemaker is an integral part of its owners no less than the owner's corneas. Moreover, it represents millennia of accumulated human knowledge and endeavour. It IS human. Many products of human civilization are either anthropomorphic or extension of humans. Mankind has often confused its functional capacity to alter ELEMENTS in nature - with an alleged (and totally mythical) capacity to modify NATURE itself.

Why all this sophistry? Because I think that it is meaningless to discuss the surpassing of Man (the "next" human race) in ideal isolation. We need to discuss (1) the future of nature, (2) the future of the biological evolution of Mankind (genes), (3) the future of social evolution (memes) as well as (4) the future of other - less complete or comprehensive - members of the human family (like artificial intelligence machines) - and then we need to discuss the interactions between all these - before we can say anything meaningful about the future of Mankind. The two common mistakes (Man as another kind of animal - the result of evolution - and Man as the crown of creation - unrelated to other animals) lead us nowhere. We must adopt a mixture of the two.

Let me embark on this four chaptered agenda by studying biological evolution.

With the advent of genetic engineering, humans have acquired the ability to effect phyletic (species-forming) evolution as well as to profoundly enhance the ancient skill of phenetic (or ecotypic) evolution (tinkering with the properties of

individuals within a species). This is a ground shaking development. It changes the very rules of the game. Nature itself is an old hand at phyletic evolution - but nature is presumed to lack intelligence, introspection, purpose and time horizons. In other words, nature is non-purposive in its actions - it is largely random. It is eternal and "takes its time" in its "pursuit" of trials and errors. It is not intelligent and, therefore, acts with "brute force", conducting its "experiments" on entire populations and gene pools. It is not introspective - so it possesses no model of its own actions in relation to any external framework (=it recognizes no external framework, it possesses no meaning). It is its own "selection filter" - it subjects the products of its processes to itself as the ultimate test. The survivability of a new species created by nature is tested by subjecting the naturally-fostered new species to nature itself (=to environmental stimuli) as the only and ultimate arbiter.

Man's intervention in its own phenetic evolution and in the phenetic and phyletic evolution of other species is both guaranteed (it is an explicitly stated aim) and guaranteed to be un-natural. Man is purposive, introspective, intelligent and temporally finite. If we adopt the position that nature is infinitely lacking in intelligence and that Man is only finitely intelligent and generally unwise - then genetic engineering and biotechnology spell trouble.

Luckily, two obstacles stand in the way of rampant experimentation with human genetics (with the exception of rogue scientists and madmen dictators). One is the consensus that Man's phyletic evolution should be left alone. The other is the fact that both human phenetic and phyletic evolution is on-going. Man's phenetic evolution has been somewhat arrested by human culture and civilization which rendered ecotypic evolution inefficient by comparison. Culturation is a much faster, adaptable, adaptative, efficacious and specific set of processes than the slow-grinding, oft-erring, dumb phenetic evolution. To use Dawkins' terminology, adaptation enhancing "memes" are more easily communicable and more error-free than mutating genes. But evolution IS on-going. As Man invades new ecological niches (such as space) - his evolution into a general-purpose, non-specific animal is likely to continue apace.

Of course, the real menace lies in the breakdown of the current consensus. What if certain people did decide to create a new human sub-species or species? Philosophically, they would just be accelerating Nature's labours. If the new-fangled species is suitably adapted to its environmental niches it will survive and, perhaps, prevail. If not - it will perish. Yet, this is an erroneous view. Accelerating Nature is not a mere quantitative issue - it is also a qualitative one. Having two concurrent speeds or "clocks" of evolution can lead to biological disasters. Polynesian islanders were wiped out by diseases imported from Europe, for instance. The whole of humanity can and will be wiped out by a new organism if not properly (=genetically) protected against it. Hence the contemporary mass hysteria with genetically modified food. Culture will be the first to adapt to the presence of such an ominous presence - but culture often reacts dysfunctionally

and in a manner which exacerbates the problem. Consider Europe's reaction to the plague in the 14th century. Genetic mutations will occur but they require thousands of years and do not constitute an adequately adaptative response. Genetic engineering unchecked can lead to genetic annihilation. The precedent of nuclear weapons is encouraging - people succeeded in keeping their fingers off the red button. But genetic mutations are surreptitious and impossible to control. It is a tough challenge.

I will await your response before continuing to discuss the other three issues (the evolution of nature itself, of other human species and of culture).

Sam

Dear Sam,

I almost agree with your arguments. The trouble lies, as ever, in that we are both the observer and the observed. This, at least, is what defines "humans". This strange property of observing and the communication of our observations to others - language- is what sets us apart.

Whenever we talk about surpassing, evolution, it is, as Nietzsche stated, a kind of valuing, a kind of statement we make about the world, a *weltanschauung*. We are measuring from our own point of view. As an individual statement, human valuing - and by extension, human evolution and surpassing - can be achieved from many - 6000 million - private points of view.

Examining it from a wider view, Darwinian evolution, it seems that the evolution of "homo" is a dialectical, eliminating one. This evolution is, as it seems, all encompassing and surpassing - there is no *Homo Australopithecus*, no Neanderthals, it rests only upon *Homo Sapiens*. Wherever we look at human beings they are the same - "all humans are brothers". They smile, cry and have a - more or less complex - language. Every child- from the Inuits to Australian aborigines, having been educated in the same environment would display similar qualities.

But, as you have well pointed, we cannot eliminate the possibility of co-habitation. There are a lot of different ants - some can even fly (a great difference), but they co-exist. In a contemporary sci-fi film, *Blade* - in which there is a mixture of two great post-modern myths: of Conspiracy and the SuperMan (the script is filled with Nietzschean echoes) - the vampires ( supermen) live among humans, disguised, in secrecy... and control the world behind the cover of mega-corporations.

What if we were to think, as the pre-Socratics have, that limits, the *logos* is what defines a presence. Which are the limits of human beings? In the pre- McLuhan

era, these limits were clearly defined, the limits of the human body, of its physis. If one is not a dualist, he must conclude that any surpassing of man should be, also, a surpassing of its body-cum-mind. In our age (the McLuhan one:-), the limits are blurred - could this be a symptom of an actual change? Technology is invading the human body - the fashion of piercing is nothing but an experiment with human adaptability to metals and plastics. In my opinion this is a prejudice: whether or not a man in an F-18 actually does outweigh (in a raw Darwinian sense) masses of desert nomads - it is conceivable that one of those Arab children that is being surpassed by the manned aircraft above, can learn to fly and pilot an F-111 over New York - or Jerusalem. Once a person with a microchip has a night-X-vision, anyone will be able to equal (or surpass) him by using the same chip. If we want to be consistent, tools are just that, tools.

So, the real change must appear abruptly, inborn in the human being, from the inside. It should happen at its birth, in a seminal way, and this leads us to genetics. Every new-born is a possibility, a novelty. The Greeks called the neonates NEOS, the new ones. What, in the past, we did with our body-heart-mind engaged in sexual love, that alchemy, we now try to replicate in a technical way.

"In a technical way" means in a purely rational-causal way. This is, in my opinion an error. Focused on the Apolinean side, while ignoring the Dionysean, the technician cannot avoid his own blindness. This excess of form, of control, will produce an eruption of the elementary side of life - as it is related in Euripides' "The Bacchanals".

But the pure technician has no dreams (this is one of his characteristics), he cannot envisage what to do. He is like Aladdin, he has the Uranium Lamp, but he doesn't know what words he has to say to its genie. So, where can we look to - to see these myths? To the techno-artists. Comics books, for instance, have been studying the technical possibilities of surpassing man a long time now. Indeed, all those experiments arouse human limits as we know them. The technicians maintain these ways like steers under a yoke. If we were to make a study of books read by technicians in their infancy we will surely have discovered the names of Jules Verne, A.C. Clarke, Carl Sagan and others of the Sci-fi genre. The very expression "science-fiction" is revealing. Technology explores the surpassing of body-and-mind limitations: tele-pathy, tele-vision, tele-kinetics, tele-control and all teles and omnis, increased energy, power, etc. If one wants to learn the essence of technology it is better to take a look at mangas ,comics and animation. What other superman is even better known than Nietzsche's?:-)

So, a man that with his own body-and-mind will perform some of these tele-surpassings will be, without doubt, a superman. It is interesting to note that this is nothing new - some cultures, Zen, or the Chinese Taoist Nei-Gong techniques have searched for these potentialities. The Nei-Gong practitioner can, so they say, travel long distances with his spirit. We have heard similar thoughts from the alchemists

in search of the philosophers' stone. We also know of Yogi experiments of surpassing human limits.

Well, this is just a possibility. As we have already said, there are many forms of surpassing, at least one for each human being. It is interesting to note that from a higher point of view, there are basically two types of surpassing depending on whether we regard perfection (limits) as vested in the past or in the future. The former (tribal, circular cultures) try to surpass man in a mythical way (the hero is a semi-god, a superman), the latter (progressive cultures) in a technological one.

There are also, some people who, as you have well suggested, looks for a mixture of the two. This is the case of Sri Aurobindo. His theories are quite complex so I recommend to study his lectures in a deep way - those interested can read a complete summary of his doctrine of future evolution on the internet (fans of the "information society" and the "new age" will find Aurobindo's writings very suggestive:-)

Aurobindo links all evolutions, moral, biological and mental. He applies to them Indian metaphysics. The progressive states of Nature, form, matter and spirit - similar to that classic Taoist scale that goes from jing to chi to shen and to the universal (void?). Aurobindo uses these traditions to build an ultra-historic theory - in this particular sense he is giving Darwin a direction, a sense, not just an eternal fight, a polemos, an adaptative war but also a development. But better read Aurobindo himself:

## **The Future Evolution of Man**

by Sri Aurobindo

### ***Chapter 9: The Divine Life Upon Earth***

New powers of consciousness and new faculties will develop in the gnostic being who will use them in a natural, normal and spontaneous way both for knowledge and for action.

An evolution of innate and latent but as yet unevolved powers of consciousness is not considered admissible by the modern mind, because these exceed our present formulation of Nature and, to our ignorant preconceptions founded on a limited experience, they seem to belong to the supernatural, to the miraculous and occult; for they surpass the known action of material Energy which is now ordinarily accepted as the sole cause and mode of things and the sole instrumentation of the World-Force. A human working of marvels, by the conscious being discovering and developing an instrumentation of material forces overpassing anything that Nature or man has yet organized is not admitted as possible. But there would be nothing supernatural or miraculous in such an evolution, except in so far as it would be a supernature or superior nature to ours just as human nature is a

supernature or superior nature to that of animal or plant or material objects. Our mind and its powers, our use of reason, our mental intuition and insight, speech, possibilities of philosophical, scientific, aesthetic discovery of the truths and potencies of being and a control of its forces are an evolution that has taken place: yet it would seem impossible if we took our stand on the limited animal consciousness and its capacities; for there is nothing there to warrant so prodigious a progression. But still there are vague initial manifestations, rudimentary elements or arrested possibilities in the animal to which our reason and intelligence with their extraordinary developments stand as an unimaginable journey from a poor and unpromising point of departure. The rudiments of spiritual powers belonging to the gnostic supernature are similarly there even in our ordinary composition, but only occasionally and sparsely active. It is not irrational to suppose that at this much higher stage of the evolution a similar but greater progression starting from these rudimentary beginnings might lead to another immense development and departure.

In mystic experience - when there is an opening of the inner centres, or in other ways, spontaneously or by will or endeavour or in the very course of the spiritual growth - new powers of consciousness have been known to develop; they present themselves as if an automatic consequence of some inner opening or in answer to a call in the being, so much so that it has been found necessary to recommend to the seeker not to hunt after these powers, not to accept or use them. This rejection is logical for those who seek to withdraw from life; for all acceptance of greater power would bind to life or be a burden on the bare and pure urge towards liberation. An indifference to all other aims and issues is natural for the God-lover who seeks God for His own sake and not for power or any other inferior attraction; the pursuit of these alluring but often dangerous forces would be a deviation from his purpose. A similar rejection is a necessary self-restraint and a spiritual discipline for the immature seeker, since such powers may be a great, even a deadly peril; for their supernormality may easily feed in him an abnormal exaggeration of the ego. Power in itself may be dreaded as a temptation by the aspirant to perfection, because power can abase as well as elevate; nothing is more liable to misuse. But when new capacities come as an inevitable result of the growth into a greater consciousness and a greater life and that growth is part of the very aim of the spiritual being within us, this bar does not operate; for a growth of the being into supernature and its life in supernature cannot take place or cannot be complete without bringing with it a greater power of consciousness and a greater power of life and the spontaneous development of an instrumentation of knowledge and force normal to that supernature. There is nothing in this future evolution of the being which could be regarded as irrational or incredible; there is nothing in it abnormal or miraculous: it would be the necessary course of the evolution of consciousness and its forces in the passage from the mental to the gnostic or supramental formulation of our existence. This action of the forces of supernature would be a natural, normal and spontaneously simple working of the new higher or greater consciousness into which the being enters in the course of

his self- evolution; the gnostic being accepting the gnostic life would develop and use the powers of this greater consciousness, even as man develops and uses the powers of his mental nature.

The life of gnostic beings might fitly be characterized as a superhuman or divine life.

But it must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood.

A gnostic Supernature transcends all the values of our normal ignorant Nature; our standards and values are created by ignorance and therefore cannot determine the life of Supernature. At the same time our present nature is a derivation from Supernature and is not a pure ignorance but a half-knowledge; it is therefore reasonable to suppose that whatever spiritual truth there is in or behind its standards and values will reappear in the higher life, not as standards, but as elements transformed, uplifted out of the ignorance and raised into the true harmony of a more luminous existence. As the universalized spiritual individual sheds the limited personality, the ego, as he rises beyond mind to a completer knowledge in Supernature, the conflicting ideals of the mind must fall away from him, but what is true behind them will remain in the life of Supernature. The gnostic consciousness is a consciousness in which all contradictions are cancelled or fused into each other which all contradictions are cancelled or fused into each other in a higher light of seeing and being, in a unified self-knowledge and world-knowledge. The gnostic being will not accept the mind's ideals and standards; he will not be moved to live for himself, for his ego, or for humanity or for others or for the community or for the State; for he will be aware of something greater than these half- truths, of the Divine Reality, and it is for that he will live, for its will in himself and in all, in a spirit of large universality, in the light of the will of the Transcendence. For the same reason there can be no conflict between self-affirmation and altruism in the gnostic life, for the self of the gnostic being is one with the self of all - no conflict between the ideal of individualism and the collective ideal, for both are terms of a greater Reality and only in so far as either expresses the Reality or their fulfilment serves the will of the Reality, can they have a value for his spirit. But at the same time what is true in the mental ideals and dimly figured in them will be fulfilled in his existence; for while his consciousness exceeds the human values so that he cannot substitute mankind or the community or the State or others or himself for God, the affirmation of the Divine in himself and a sense of the Divine in others and the sense of oneness with humanity, with all other beings, with all the world because of the Divine in them and a lead towards a greater and better affirmation of the growing Reality in them will be part of his life action. But what he shall do will be decided by the Truth of the Knowledge and Will in him, a total an infinite Truth that is not bound by any single mental law or standard but acts with freedom in the whole reality, with respect for each truth in its place and with a clear knowledge of the forces at work

and the intention in the manifesting Divine Nisus at each step of cosmic evolution and in each event and circumstance.

The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance - for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit within determining the law of the nature would determine the frame of the life and its detail and circumstance. In all there would be the same plastic principle; a rigid standardization, however necessary for the mind's arrangement of things, could not be the law of the spiritual life. A great diversity and liberty of self-expression based on an underlying unity might well become manifest; but everywhere there would be harmony and truth of order.

A life of gnostic beings carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status might fitly be characterized as a divine life; for it would be a life in the Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material Nature. That might be described, since it surpasses the mental human level, as a life of spiritual and supramental supermanhood. But this must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood; for supermanhood in the mental idea consists of an overtopping of the normal human level, not in kind but in degree of the same kind, by an enlarged personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of mind, an increased power of vital force, a refined or dense and massive exaggeration of the forces of the human Ignorance; it carries also, commonly implied in it, the idea of a forceful domination over humanity by a superman. That would mean a supermanhood of the Nietzschean type; it might be at its worst the reign of the 'blonde beast' or the dark beast or of any and every beast, a return to barbaric strength and ruthlessness and force: but this would be no evolution, it would be a reversion to an old strenuous barbarism.

But earth has had enough of this kind in her past and its repetition can only prolong the old lines; she can get no true profit for her future, no power of self-exceeding, from the Titan, the Asura: even a great or supernormal power in it could only carry her on larger circles of her old orbit. But what has to emerge is something much more difficult and much more simple; it is a self-realized being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty,-- not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it.



This is the sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of a step forward in evolutionary Nature.

It would be a misconception to think that a life in the full light of Knowledge would lose its charm and become an insipid monotony.

The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest offered to us by the world of Ignorance.

This new status would indeed be a reversal of the present law of human consciousness and life, for it would reverse the whole principle of the life of the Ignorance. It is for the taste of the Ignorance, its surprise and adventure, one might say, that the soul has descended into the Inconscience and assumed the disguise of Matter, for the adventure and the joy of creation and discovery, an adventure of the spirit, an adventure of the mind and life and the hazardous surprises of their working in Matter, for the discovery and conquest of the new and the unknown; all this constitutes the enterprise of life and all this, it might seem, would cease with the cessation of the Ignorance. Man's life is made up of the light and the darkness, the gains and losses, the difficulties and dangers, the pleasures and pains of the Ignorance, a play of colours moving on a soil of the general neutrality of Matter which has as its basis the nescience and insensibility of the Inconscient. To the normal life-being an existence without the reactions of success and frustration, vital joy and grief, peril and passion, pleasure and pain, the vicissitudes and uncertainties of fate and struggle and battle and endeavour, a joy of novelty and surprise and creation projecting itself into the unknown, might seem to be void of variety and therefore void of vital savour. Any life surpassing these things tends to appear to it as something featureless and empty or cast in the figure of an immutable sameness; the human mind's picture of heaven is the incessant repetition of an eternal monotone. But this is a misconception; for an entry into the gnostic consciousness would be an entry into the Infinite. It would be a self-creation bringing out the Infinite infinitely into form of being, and the interest of the Infinite is much greater and multitudinous as well as more imperishably delightful than the interest of the finite. The evolution in the Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The delight of the Spirit is ever new, the forms of beauty it takes innumerable, its godhead ever young and the taste of delight, raising of the Infinite eternal and inexhaustible. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance; it would be a greater and happier constant miracle.

If there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or later stage of our

destiny. The self, the spirit, the reality that is disclosing itself out of the first inconscience of life and matter, would evolve its complete truth of being and consciousness in that life and matter. It would return to itself - or, if its end as an individual is to return into its Absolute, it could make that return also - not through a frustration of life but through a spiritual completeness of itself in life. Our evolution in the Ignorance with its chequered joy and pain of self- discovery and world-discovery, its half-fulfilments, its constant finding and missing, is only our first state. It must lead inevitably towards an evolution in the Knowledge, a self-finding and self- unfolding of the Spirit, a self-revelation of the Divinity in things in that true power of itself in Nature which is to us still a Supernature.

**The Future Evolution of Man - Sri Aurobindo**  
***Conclusion of Chapter 9 - The Divine Life on Earth***

Summary by P.B. Saint-Hilaire  
August 1962

To an artist, a human being that saw surpassing from an aesthetic point of view this is, without doubt, a beautiful one. But we, artists, don't believe in any progress or evolution, we believe in the future, in risk, intuition, measure, form, creation/destruction, a constant flow of water and forms, a flame that lives by itself, originals, individuals fulfilling all their possibilities - in that sense Aurobindo's Supernature shall always be, for any individual and at any time, possible. Well, it is just another potential. Apres on verra.

In next letters I will abandon the palaces of India palaces and come back to the laboratories of the West, you know: Faust, Mephisto, Wagner and all those funny guys - so we will keep our surpassing dialogue:-) See you.

Best regards  
roberto

Dear Roberto,

Here is a more prosaic vision, devoid of spirits and Divine Beings - but, I think, a more natural progression from our current point of departure.

In his dreams of electric sheep, Man is drawn inexorably to his technological alter-ego. A surrealistic landscape of broken Bosch nightmares and Dali clocks, in which Man tiptoes, on the verge of a revelation, with the anticipatory anxiety of love. We are not alone. We have been looking to the stars for company and, all that time, our companions were locked in the dungeons of our minds, craving to exit to this world, a stage. We are designing the demise of our own uniqueness. We, hitherto the only humans, bring forth intelligent, new breeds of Man, metal sub-

species, the wired stock, a gene pool of bits of bytes. We shall inherit the earth with them. Humans of flesh and blood and humans of silicon and glass. A network of old human versions and new human members (formerly known as "machines") - this is the future. This has always been the way of nature. Our bodies are giant colonies of smaller organisms, some of them formerly completely independent (the mitochondria). Organisms are the results of stable equilibrium-symbiosis permeated by a common mind with common goals and common means of achieving them. In this sense, the emerging human-technological complex is a NEW ORGANISM with the internet as its evolving central nervous system. Leaving Earth for space would be the equivalent of birth (remember the Gaia hypothesis according to which Earth herself is an organism)? Cyborgs (in the deeper sense of the world - not the pop culture half baked images) will populate new niches (moons and planets and other galaxies and inter-planetary and inter-galactic spaces). Long before Man evolves into another animal through genetic mutations and genetic engineering - he will integrate with technology into an awesome new species. It is absolutely conceivable to have self-replicating technologies embedded in human DNA, complete with randomly induced mutations. You mentioned "Blade" - I counter with "Blade Runner", a world inhabited by humans and cyborgs, indistinguishable from each other.

The cyborgs of the future will be intimately and very finely integrated. Blood flooded brains will access, almost telepathically (through implanted tiny wireless transmitters and receivers) the entire network of other brains and machines. They will extract information, contribute, deposit data and analyses, collaborate, engage and disengage at will. An intelligent and non-automatic ant colony, an introspective, feedback generating beehive, a swarm of ever growing complexity. Computing will be all-pervasive and incredibly tiny by today's standards - virtually invisible. It will form an inseparable part of human bodies and minds. New types of humans will be constantly designed to effectively counter nature's challenges through flexible diversity. Adapting to new niches - a toddler's occupation until now - will have become a full fledged science. The Universe will present trillions of environmental niche options where mere millions existed on Earth. A qualitative shift in our ability to cope with a cosmological future - requires a cosmological shift in the very definition of humanity. This definition must be expanded to include the products of humanity (e.g., technology).

Before long, humans will design and define nature itself. Whereas until now we adapted very limited aspects of nature to our needs - accepting as inevitable the bigger, over-riding parameters as constraints - the convergence of all breeds of humanity will endow Mankind with the power to destroy and construct nature itself. Man will most certainly be able to blow stars to smithereens, to deflect suns from their orbits, to harness planets and carry them along, to deform the very fabric of space and time. Man will invent new species, create new life, suspend death, design intelligence. In other words, God - killed by Man - will be re-incarnated in Man. Nothing less than being God will secure Mankind's future.

It is, therefore, both futile and meaningless to ask how will Nature's future course affect the surpassing of Man. The surpassing of Man is, by its very definition, the surpassing of Nature itself, its manipulation and control, its re-definition and modification, its abolition and resurrection, its design and re-combination. The surpassing of Man's nature is the birth of man-made nature.

The big question is how will culture - this most flexible of mechanisms of adaptation - react to these tectonic shifts?

Sam

Dear Sam,

I liked your prognosis, it is quite correct :-). By the way, I do not know if I share Aurobindo's ideas. I just intended to demonstrate how different "surpassings" can be seen from different side of world. Yours is that of the West, technological, utopic, fantastic and titanic.

The transforming of earth by technological means. It is the old dream of the titans: to overthrow the gods. But they always lose and are punished, will they win this time? Will this be the century of the titans? It seems so...

Your last question is brilliant. Let's read it again:

"The big question is how will culture - this most flexible of mechanisms of adaptation - react to these tectonic shifts?"

Your question sums up all the problem and as a free gift , it provides a picture of the situation - which I earlier called the "inclined plane". The use of the expression "tectonic shifts" is opportune and could be correct not only in a metaphorical sense. Something is moving under the surface. Volcanic, plutonic, elemental forces. It is interesting to note that, in such a view, technology appears not as a neutral medium but as an elemental force, a type of motion of the Earth itself - you use the term "organism". Technology as a phase of metamorphosis. This is a good start, here we have a pattern to work with. We have no reason to think there is something like progress in the universe (nature). All natural motions are circular, a development, they are born, grow, mature and die. Will technology preserve this natural cycle? That is to say, is "it", earthly technology, reaching an apex that will end in a quiet state - this point in time being its most celeriac motion - like the optical effect of a spinning wheel?

If this hypothesis is true then your fantastic dream about the super-techno-man will go the same way as the Stock Market does. It will grow till the last tension, it will accelerate to the fastest movement. It will explode as a supernova does and will

illuminate the whole world like the fireworks of a great festival. It will live just an instant, a magical moment where time and space will be fixed once more. Having surpassed this point of maximum expression it will decay and die.

In a few centuries, cows will graze in the ruins of the skyscrapers of technological mega-corporations, like the cattle which idled in Roman ruins shortly after its decadence. The other option means that the fastest motion implies a qualitative change, an epiphenomenon. We know very little about such changes, but surely it will mean the appearance of a meta-technology, or to be more precise, of magic.

This is a higher, a-human point of view - by its very essence, a solution cannot be found in time. What about the individual? What about free will, human choice? Shall we maintain the traditional knowledge that human choice is transcendent? Or shall we dwell on the modern, nihilistic way: nothing matters, we are mere subjects, slaves of elemental forces?

It is interesting to note that your concept of technology reveals it as elementary, "an organism". Then, in a reversal appears your audacious prophecy: Man will be God. Well, I have no question in my mind, Man will be a divinity, that is for sure. But here I disagree with you: he will not be "THE God", not even a "primus inter pares" one. To do that, to become THE god, to have the dominion, Man's mind should be infinite, and this is too bold, even for a technician:-))

Let's say, for all practical intents and purposes, that humans are left facing a choice, a decision has to be made. What values, which parameters shall Man apply in his choice? To the Greeks, hubris was the "sin of sins". The classic myth is that of Prometheus. What does it mean, this permanent obsession with limits, with hubris? Was it a primitive fear, a superstition, or is there some truth behind the mask? Does it mean that an excess of growth could provoke a dissolution of the organism?

Some answers in the next chapter of Surpassing man.

To be continued

Best regards  
roberto

Dear RCM,

It is my turn to compliment you. You touched upon the main point: the dilemma's horns - magic versus culture. Technology is nothing but an instrument, a tool, a convenience. It has no intrinsic value divorced from this dilemma. It IS an elementary power unleashed. A natural manifestation - everything Man does is

natural. But it secondary is to the real, conflicting camps in this Armageddon: magic versus culture. Magic versus culture - we should repeat this as an old-new mantra, as the plasma ejected from the supernova that our unconscious has become. People were terrified of nuclear weapons - and all the time this fundamental, savage battle was in the background, a battle much more decisive as far as the future of our race is concerned.

Because this is what it boils down to, this is the Hobson's choice we are faced with, this is the horror that we must confront:

If the only way to preserve our civilization is to de-humanize it - should we agree - or is it better to die? If the propagation of our culture, our world, our genetic material, our memory, our history - means that Man as we have known him hitherto will be no more or shall become only one of many human races - should we ink this Faustian deal?

Man, as he is, cannot survive if science and technology move on to become magic (as they have been doing since 1905). Should the larva sacrifice itself to become a butterfly? Is there a cultural, racial and collective after-life? Are we asked to commit suicide or just to dream differently?

All human civilizations till now have been anthropomorphic. There simply were no other human forms around and the technology to spawn such new races was absent. The universe was deterministic, uniform, isotropic and single - a "human-size" warm abode. Einstein, quantum mechanics, astrophysics, particle physics, string theory - expelled us from this cosy paradise into a dark universe with anti-matter, exploding supernovas, cold spinning neutron stars and ominous black holes. Hidden dimensions and parallel, shadow universes complete the nightmarish quality of modern science. The trauma is still fresh and biblical in proportion. Biology is where physics was pre-Einstein and is about to cast us into an outer darkness inhabited by genetic demons far more minacious than anything physics has ever offered. Artificial intelligence will complete what Copernicus has started: Man denuded of his former glory as the crowned centre of creation. Not only is our world not the centre of a universe with a zillion stars - we are likely not the only intelligent or even human race around. Our computers and our robots will shortly join us. A long awaited meeting with aliens is fast becoming certainty the more planets we discover in distant systems.

But all this - while mind boggling - is NOT magic.

What introduced magic into our lives - really and practically and daily - is the Internet. Magic is another word for INTERCONNECTEDNESS. Event A causes (=is connected to) Event B without any linearly traceable or reconstructible CHAIN of causes and effects. An Indra's Net - one pebble lifted - all pebbles move. Chaos theory reduced to its now (in)famous "butterfly causes hurricane"

illustration. Fractals which contain themselves in regression (though not infinite). The equality of all points in a network. Magic is all about NETWORKS and networking - and so is the Internet.

The more miniaturization, processing speed and computing power - the more we asymptotically approximate magic. Technology now converges with magic - it is a confluence of all our dreams and all our nightmares gushing forth, foaming and sparkling and exploding in amazingly colourful jets and rainbows. It is a new promise - but not of divine origin. It is OUR promise to ourselves.

And it is in this promise that the threat lies. Magic accepts no exclusivity (for instance, of intelligent forms of life). Magic accepts no linearity (as in the idea of progress or of TIME or of entropy). Magic accepts no hierarchy (as in West versus East, or Manager versus Employee and the other hierarchies which make up our human world). Magic accepts no causation, no idealization (as an idealized observer), no explanations. Magic demands simultaneity - science abhors it. The idea of magic is too much of a revolution for the human mind - precisely because it is so intuitively FAMILIAR, it is so basic and primordial. To live magically, one must get to really know oneself. But culture and civilization were invented to DENY the self, to HIDE it, to FALSIFY it, to DISTORT it. So, magic is anathema to culture. The two CANNOT co-exist. But Man has scarcely existed without some kind of culture. Hence the immensity of the challenge.

Which brings us full circle to Nietzsche and his surpassing. It is an overcoming of CULTURE that he is talking about - and a reversion to the older arts of intuition and magic. The ubermensch is a natural person in the fullest sense. It is not that he is a savage - on the contrary, he is supremely erudite. It is not that he is impolite, aggressive, violent - he is none of these things. But he is the ultimate authority, his own law-setter, an intuitive genius and, by all means, a magician.

Until later,

Sam

Dear Sam,

Your last letter is so condensed, so finely drawn, that I have almost nothing to say. That's the way I see the short-term future. All your prognoses, either pertaining to genetics, or to robots and culture seem to be quite correct. They are - if we can put it this way - the most probable ones. Just several brief notes addressed to the individual.

First: one can choose to ink or not to ink, but if one chooses to ink this faustian deal he must sign it with blood, this is not a bourgeoisie contract:-)

Second: your precision on the natural, not the divine, origin is accurate. Certainly, information is the highest expression of the spirit but it is not the spirit itself. Yet, the doors are still open, mutation is possible at any time.

Third: as his proper name indicates, the ubermensch must also be surpassed. He shall understand and succeed in completing the will to power with creation, to reverse it, to discover that the will to power is a primary inner drive, or better said, a drive to inner perfection. Expansion shall spring only after the inner rain:-)

For personal use, our readers can use your prognostics - applying the necessary adjustments to each concrete case. As you have well stated the change is so radical that we should be very careful. I will end summarily my digression on hubris: we are moving so fast that our knowledge is precarious, our tradition is in ruins. We have no fixed centre, so we have no clear limits. There is no way back, we must walk this path to the end, our limits exist only in our inner heart.

Our first attitude should always be the same as Talleyrand's. He summarized his hypercomplex policy in just one sentence: "Over all, none of fanaticism". As I cannot say much more about the future "combat fields", I would like to propose, semi-seriously, quasi-jokingly, an adequate ethos to walk us through these tempests, just a suggestion, a starting point. What could be a good ethos in a magical space? Obviously, that of Alice in Wonderland. Always nourish the child inside, take the world as a game, take the game as it were life at stake, take life as if it were a game. The twenty-first century should be a FAREWELL FESTIVAL, plenty of art, sex, vitality, good manners. We should be the Greeks of the new, becoming Man. No morals, only models. Everyone has his own ethos inside. When there is no moral we have to turn our eyes to beauty. The future is just a part of our work - and not the most important one. Don't sell your actual life for a future one. To act with extreme tenderness facing the gravest situations and vice versa is the hallmark of "the culture of the immediate". External discipline, internal anarchy. Don't take anything totally in earnest, not even the ubermensch, only the style. There exist some oases in the dessert, places where we can stock on fresh water and play seriously: Sexual Love, Amiticia, the Muses and some others.

Your last letter is so complete that I don't see any reason to enlarge this long surpassing dialogue. But, It has been almost an established tradition to end my part of the dialogue with a little tale - and, must confess, I love traditions. So here it is:

### **Helena, a Temptation** *A True Story*

"Ricky was a young boy, he had a heart of stone." His parents wanted him to be the best. They gave DNA to NuovaVita, a new maternity-hospital. They said they will do the mixing. The Vita boys got to work. They refined his DNA to provide him



with a privileged mind. So they did. The poor boy was a little monster but he broke all records, so who cared. He passed his infancy among computers. He had two close friends: Mac and Compaq. At the age of six he began to program with Visual Basic. At twelve years old, he programmed in Witgen, Shannon and other languages. At fourteen his routines acquired such mathematical beauty to exceed the Bach Variations'.

Four years at Stanford (paid exclusively with scholarships), programming, cum laude in all disciplines. He never got out of the labs. Two years to a doctorate at MIT, genetic computation, cum laude. He never got out of the lab. He was waiting for his time to come. Finally, he entered work in Orchid, the mega-corporation of hyper-genetics. They were the best and so was he.

So, his time had come. He earned a lot of money. Soon afterwards he went to a expensive clinic in Houston, the plastic surgeon was very "plastic" indeed, he made miracles. After he passed his hands the boy was pretty smug - "good work, doc" - and gave him the million check. Now he was the king of the town, threw great parties and have all the girls we wanted. His motto was: one night stands. But that was not enough, his thirst was unquenchable.

So he started to invest extra hours at work, to climb the corporate ladders and he entered its board of directors. Finally, he sold his stock and with the money he got, bought an old big house in the country and built a little lab at home. During the weekends, he kept on with his nightlife in the city: Studio 54, Limelight, The Tunnel. All doors were open to him, he had the money and the looks. Actresses, whores, rock singers, groupies, secretaries, pin-up girls, all went to bed with him.

But now the thing was a bit different. At night, when the girls dreamt with innocent expression, he gently drew some drops of blood from them, using a needle.

Later, at home, in the country, he continued to mix the new bloody DNA, bent on creating the Perfect Girl, his genetic bride. He designed her like a Renaissance sculptor, with passion and violence and perfection. One night, after hundreds of girls, he finally obtained his essence. He put it in the incubator and witnessed the creature springing like a rose. He kept her in a crystal bubble in order to avoid any contact that could rot his beloved apple, but he placed a Dream Station inside, so that the girl would learn to talk with its screen. Ricky saw her behind the mirrors. "My God, she is so extremely beautiful". But he did his best as a loving father would to introduce all beauty in the girl's life: Mozart, Byron, Becquer, Holderlin, Horatio... Later the child began to choose her own: Portishead, Prince, Bjork, No Doubt, Breat Easton Ellis, The Smashing Pumpkins, Kevin Smith films, DJ Shadow, Matt Damon, Keanu Reeves...

Finally, the great day drew near. The girl was going to be 18. The week before, Ricky was so full of emotions, he couldn't sleep. "Just a couple of hours". He

poured himself a glass of Chivas, sat comfortably in his sofa and looked at the crystal walls. His eyes began to shut very slowly as though he were about to have a beautiful dream.

The computer's clock marked her age: 18 years. The door opened with a "click". The girl got out with the fear of a virgin at a wedding night. Ricky was on the sofa with the bottle in his hand. The TV was on with the last film of Leonardo di Caprio. Coup de foudre, the girl fell in love at first sight. Got her Burton bag, took his MP3, put on her Ultralux glasses and said "good bye, love".

A week later, when the police got into the house, the windows were wide open. The mountain wind softly swung Ricky's corpse like a pendulum. Hundreds of books were spread on the floor. On the icebox, attached with a little "red heart magnet", was a post-it (TM) note:

Dear Ricky,

Sorry for not saying goodbye, but your face was so serene that I did not dare to wake you up. I want to be a film star, must go to Hollywood. I know you will understand. It's my career, my life. Thanks for everything.

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PS: Don't forget to call me if you go to Cali some time

Best wishes  
roberto

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